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#3

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SMITH
QUESADA
PALMIOTTI

HERE COMES...

DAREDEVIL®

THE MAN WITHOUT FEAR!

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I'VE BEEN BLIND SINCE I WAS A CHILD, AND AS A RESULT, I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN THE WOMAN WHO CRIED HERSELF TO SLEEP IN MY BED LAST NIGHT.

HER NAME IS KAREN PAGE. WE'VE BEEN KNEE-DEEP IN ONE ANOTHER FOR YEARS, BUT SIX MONTHS AGO, SHE LEFT ME.

LAST NIGHT, SHE SHOWED UP AT MY APARTMENT AND TOLD ME SHE'S H.I.V. POSITIVE. MIND YOU, THIS IS AFTER A CREEPY OLD MAN SWORE TO ME THAT -- THANKS TO THIS "EVIL" BABY I'M HARBORING -- MY LIFE WOULD BE CURSED.

IF I WERE THE GLIB TYPE, I'D SAY "IT'S BEEN ONE OF THOSE WEEKS."

BUT NOT EVEN A GOOD SENSE OF HUMOR COULD'VE PREPARED ME FOR THE PHONE CALL THAT HAS ME OUT OF BED EARLY THIS MORNING.

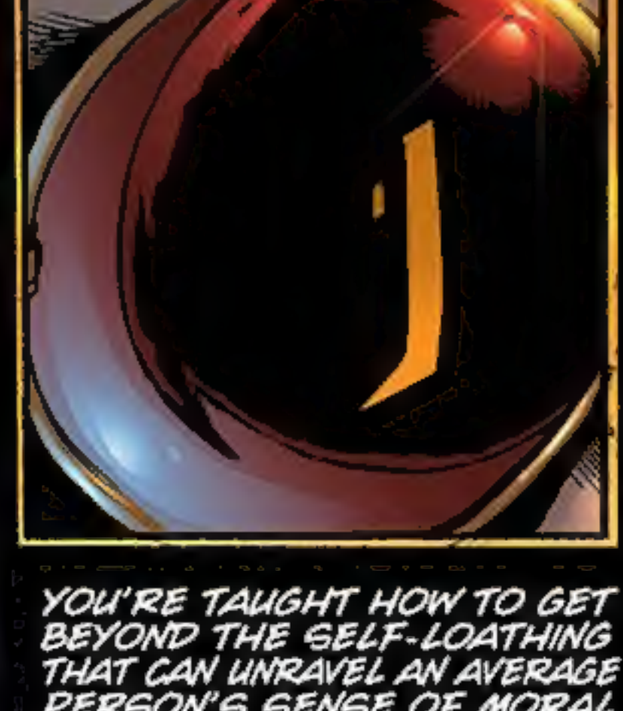
I THOUGHT I'D SPEND THE DAY TALKING KAREN DOWN FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL LEDGE SHE'S PRECARIOUSLY BALANCED ON. AFTER THE CALL, I WONDERED IF THERE WASN'T ENOUGH ROOM BESIDE HER OUT THERE.

IN LAW SCHOOL, THERE'S A SECOND, LESS ACADEMIC CURRICULUM -- BEYOND THE STANDARD TEXTBOOK STUFF. YOU'RE TAUGHT TO DEVELOP WHAT THEY REFER TO IN THE PROFESSION AS A "JUDGMENTAL VACUUM."

IT'S THE EMOTIONAL VOID A LAWYER HAS TO FIND FOR HIMSELF IN ORDER TO DEFEND A CLIENT YOU FEEL MAY NOT BE COMPLETELY INNOCENT... OR JUST FLAT-OUT GUILTY.

YOU'RE TAUGHT HOW TO GET BEYOND THE SELF-LOATHING THAT CAN UNRAVEL AN AVERAGE PERSON'S SENSE OF MORAL IDENTITY -- ALL SO EVEN THE MOST APPARENTLY GUILTY OF PARTIES CAN HAVE THE BENEFIT OF A FAIR TRIAL. YOU'RE EVEN TAUGHT TO CHERISH ZANTAC, THE ULCER MEDICINE--

-- BECAUSE IF YOU'RE LUCKY ENOUGH TO MAKE IT THROUGH THE DAY WITH YOUR INTEGRITY INTACT, CHANCES ARE WHATEVER CORROSION YOU SAVE YOUR SOUL WILL MANIFEST ITSELF IN THE LINING OF YOUR STOMACH.



STAN LEE PRESENTS DAREDEVIL IN

GUARDIAN DEVIL

PART THREE: "DYSTOPIA"

KEVIN MIX MASTAH SMITH
WRITER

JOE ICE Q QUESADA
PENCILER

JIMMY LIQUID LEAD PALMIOTTI
INKER

AVALON STUDIO'S LAURA 64 COLORS IN A BOX 'N' DREW COLORS

RICHARD STARKINGS & COMICRAFT'S LIZ UP ALL NIGHT AGRAPHIOTIS LETTERS

NANCI MAKE A MAN OUTTA YA DAKESIAN MANAGING EDITOR

BOB IT WAS ALL REALLY HIS IDEA HARRAS CHIEF

MATT -- REMEMBER TERRENCE FLANAGAN? THE GUY WE REFUSED TO DEFEND IN THAT STABBING CASE?

WELL, I SPENT LAST NIGHT TRYING NOT TO BE *'Mrs. TERRENCE FLANAGAN'*.

FOGGY... WHAT HAPPENED?

"I TOOK LYDIA McKENZIE OUT -- TO DISCUSS HER CASE OVER DINNER, AND...

I... I'M NOT SURE, MATT.

"...WELL...

"...ONE THING LED TO ANOTHER.

"IT ALL HAPPENED SO FAST.

"AND THAT'S WHEN THINGS GOT...

"...WEIRD."

"IT WASN'T HUMAN, MATT. IT CLAWED MY FACE...

"... AND THEN HURLED ITSELF THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW.

"BUT WHEN I LOOKED BELOW, I DIDN'T SEE THAT THING, I SAW LYDIA -- DEAD ON THE GROUND!

"THAT'S WHEN I CALLED THE COPS...

"... WHO FOUND IT HARD TO BELIEVE MY STORY.

"AND IN A WORLD WHERE THERE'S BEEN FAR STRANGER PHENOMENONA...

"I WAS HAULED OFF FOR MURDER ONE."

AND ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT FROM THE MOMENT I CALLED THE POLICE, TO THE MOMENT THEY BROUGHT ME IN HERE WAS...

WHAT DO I SAY TO LIZ?

I'VE LISTENED TO HIS HEARTBEAT. UNDERSTANDABLY, IT'S RACING. THE FEAR AND SHOCK ALONE WOULD INSTIGATE THAT.

BUT HE'S NOT LYING.

I FEEL LIKE GOD'S PUNISHING ME, MATT. FOR CHEATING ON LIZ.

GOD HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.

LIZ... LIZ, I'M SO SORRY...

I'LL GET TO WORK ON YOUR RELEASE, FOGGY.

THE LAW OFFICES OF SHARPE, NELSON, AND MURDOCK...

AT WHICH THE MEDIA CIRCUS HAS BEGUN.

KIM, I NEED A PARALEGAL RIGHT NOW!

RIGHT HERE MISTER MURDOCK, I'M TO YOUR LEFT.

I NEED YOU TO GET TO WORK ON POSTING BAIL FOR MISTER NELSON.

I'LL BE IN MY OFFICE, PREPPING A DEFENSE FOR THE ARRAIGNMENT.

NEVER MIND THAT, REGGIE.

GO ASK SECURITY IF WE CAN USE THE DELIVERY ENTRANCE TO GET OUT OF HERE TONIGHT --

-- SEEING AS HOW IT WOULD APPEAR THE PRESS ISN'T GOING AWAY ANY-TIME SOON. AND MATTHEW...

... MIGHT I HAVE A WORD WITH YOU IN MY OFFICE?

... KNOCK AT THE DOOR SCATTERS HER THOUGHTS.

MISS PAGE -- I'M AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MISTER MURDOCK'S.

IT'S THE STORY OF KAREN PAGE'S LIFE.

IN THE HELL'S KITCHEN APARTMENT OF MATT MURDOCK, A WOMAN TRIES TO MAKE SENSE OF HER LIFE.

BUT JUST AS SHE'S ABOUT TO STUMBLE ACROSS AN INNERPEACE...

MATT'S NOT HERE RIGHT NOW, MISTER..?

I'M NOT HERE TO SEE MATTHEW, MISS PAGE. I'M HERE TO SEE YOU.

I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT YOUR... UNFORTUNATE SITUATION.

WE'RE A LAW FIRM, MATTHEW -- AND A HIGH-PROFILE ONE AT *THAT!* A SCANDAL LIKE THIS CAN BRING THIS OFFICE DOWN FASTER THAN THE PRESS CAN GOSSIP ABOUT IT!

AND YOU THINK *FIRING* FOGGY'S GOING TO *QUELL* THAT?!?

CUTTING HIM LOOSE?!? WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!?

FIRING FRANKLIN BEFORE HIS ARREST WOULD'VE PROTECTED US FROM THE CRISIS WE NOW FIND OURSELVES IN THE MIDDLE OF.

BUT SINCE WE DIDN'T KNOW HE WAS A *RAPIST* YESTERDAY...

ARE YOU *OUT OF YOUR MIND,* LADY?!? HE'S YOUR ***SON!*** YOU *KNOW* HE'S *INNOCENT!*

ALL I KNOW IS THIS ARREST AND THE CHARGES IT CARRIES WITH IT POTENTIALLY PREJUDICES EVERY JURY IN ALL OUR CLIENTS' CASES AGAINST US...

... JEOPARDIZES THE FUTURE OF THIS FIRM, AND SULLIES MY NAME.

CAN'T AFFORD MYSELF THE LUXURY OF ENTERTAINING *ONE* OF THOSE OPTIONS, LET ALONE ALL THREE!

SWEET CHRISTMAS, SHARPE -- I THOUGHT YOU WERE COLD IN THE PAST! BUT YOUR OWN FLESH AND BLOOD..!

YOU DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T **AGONIZED** OVER THAT **ALREADY?!**

YOU DON'T THINK I HAVEN'T SPENT THE MORNING IN **TEARS** OVER **WHAT'S HAPPENING** TO MY **SON?!?** YOU DON'T THINK I'D DO **EVERYTHING** IN MY POWER TO CLEAR HIM IF **I COULD?!?**

BUT I HAVE NO CHOICE. I CAN'T RISK LOSING *EVERYTHING* I'VE BUILT OVER IMAGINED APRON STRINGS.

I'VE BEEN A LAWYER LONGER THAN I'VE BEEN A MOTHER TO FRANKLIN NELSON -- IT'S ALL I *KNOW* HOW TO BE AT THIS POINT. AND AS A LAWYER, AS A *PROFESSIONAL*... THIS IS THE ONLY COURSE I CAN SEE TO TAKE.

NICE SPEECH. I HAVE TO GO, ROSALIND -- HAVE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO PROVE MY PARTNER'S INNOCENCE.

I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T. I'M LETTING HIM GO, MATT -- NOT YOU. AND I HAVE TO CUT ALL HIS TIES TO THIS FIRM.

YOU'RE SAYING *I* ***CAN'T*** DEFEND HIM?!?

I'M SAYING THAT NONE OF THIS FIRM'S RESOURCES ARE GOING TO BE AT YOUR DISPOSAL IN THIS CASE.

THEN I ***QUIT!***

SLAM

MINUTES LATER, A FAMILIAR FIGURE LEAPS INTO THE MANHATTAN SKY...

...UNAWARE THAT, THIS TIME...

...HE HAS AN AUDIENCE...

HE'S LEFT THE BUILDING AND IS HEADED YOUR WAY. COMMENCE ATTACK.

SO MUCH TO COVER... FOGGY, KAREN AT HOME. THANK GOD AT LEAST NATASHA HAS THE BABY.

SHE CAN KEEP IT AT THIS POINT, FOR ALL I CARE. AS IF I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO...

GREAT -- I'M PICKING UP LABORED, MUFFLED BREATHING.

SOME IDIOT'S ATTACKING A WOMAN IN AN ALLEY TWO BLOCKS OVER. IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, NO LESS.

THIS I DON'T NEED RIGHT NOW.

OOFF!

GIVE ME A REASON TO VENT MY FRUSTRATION, YOU...

FFUP

DID YOU REMEMBER TO BRING THE ICE LIKE I ASKED?

THAT BAD?

YOU'VE SEEN HOW THESE PEOPLE SWOOP DOWN FROM BUILDING-TOPS.

I TAKE IT HE'S SUBDUED.

AT THE EXPENSE OF MY NECK AND BACK, YES. BRING THE VAN AROUND. AND PREP ME AN ICE-PACK.

AND I'M *H.I.V.* POSITIVE BECAUSE... BECAUSE OF THIS BABY?

I WISH IT WERE THAT SIMPLE, MISS PAGE. YOU LED A VERY... SHALL WE SAY...

... *RECKLESS* LIFE, AT ONE POINT.

BUT SOME PEOPLE CAN COME AWAY FROM A CAR WRECK WITHOUT HARM, REGARDLESS OF HOW MANGLED THE VEHICLE IS.

SUCH WAS THE CASE WITH YOU.

YOU ALMOST WALKED AWAY FROM THE DARKER ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE WITHOUT A SCRATCH. BUT THE CHILD I SPEAK OF... IT HAS A WAY OF AFFECTING PEOPLE.

ITS EVIL CORRUPTS THE LIVES OF THOSE IT TOUCHES. IT FINDS A PERSON'S WEAKNESSES -- PAST OR PRESENT --

-- AND DRAWS FROM IT CONSEQUENCES THAT NEVER PREVIOUSLY MANIFESTED THEMSELVES.

NO... NO, THAT'S RIDICULOUS! I WAS A JUNKIE! A JUNKIE WHO...

... WAS WITH ... A LOT OF PEOPLE.

SO YOU'VE SAID. BUT THEN ASK YOURSELF -- WHY ONLY NOW HAS THE INFECTION SURFACED?

IT... IT CAN TAKE A LONG TIME FOR *H.I.V.* TO SHOW UP IN YOUR BLOOD-STREAM...

A LONG TIME, YES...

BUT NOT THE YEARS IT'S TAKEN TO SHOW UP IN YOURS.

YOU'VE TESTED YOURSELF HOW OFTEN?

EVERY SIX MONTHS SINCE... SINCE THAT TIME...

AND STOPPED FRETTING ABOUT THE RESULTS YEARS AGO.

FOR AN INSURANCE POLICY AT MY NEW JOB...

BECAUSE YOU FELT YOU WERE SAFE. THE DOCTORS EVEN TOLD YOU AS MUCH -- LONG AGO. AND THIS TEST WAS JUST A FORMALITY AS WELL, WASN'T IT?

AND THE SAME DAY THAT THIS CHILD COMES INTO MISTER MURDOCK'S CARE, YOUR BIOLOGICAL MAKEUP SUDDENLY DECIDES THAT --

-- YEARS BEYOND THE CRITICAL PERIOD IN WHICH ANY POSSIBLE INFECTION WOULD'VE TAKEN ITS TOLL -- ITS IMMUNE SYSTEM HAS BEEN COMPROMISED?

BUT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING MAKES NO SENSE...

SOMETHING HAS *HAPPENED* TO YOU, KAREN PAGE -- AND IT WAS NO ACCIDENT. YOU'RE A CASUALTY IN THE WAKE OF EVIL MACHINATIONS YOUR SPECIES IS *EONS* SHY OF EVEN COMPREHENDING.

I CAN'T *KILL* A CHILD! I DON'T *CARE* WHAT YOU SAY IT IS -- I *CAN'T END A LIFE* TO *SAVE* MY *OWN!*

MANY THINGS IN LIFE DEFY CONVENTIONAL DEFINITION, YOUNG LADY. BUT THAT DOESN'T NEGATE THEIR EXISTENCE.

END THE CHILD, AND YOU END THAT EVIL -- AND REPAIR THE DAMAGE IT'S FORCED UPON THIS WORLD...

... AND YOUR LIFE.

PERHAPS NOT. PERHAPS YOU ARE THAT IGNORANTLY VALIANT.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE LIVES OF OTHERS? WHAT ABOUT THE LIVES OF *INNOCENT* PEOPLE YOU'LL NEVER MEET... OR THE ONES YOU *ALREADY* KNOW AND LOVE.

EVERLAST

LOVE? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

EVIL SPREADS LIKE A VIRUS. AND WE ALL KNOW HOW VIRUSES SPREAD -- FROM ONE PERSON TO ANOTHER.

FROM CONTACT.

FROM CLOSE, *INTIMATE* CONTACT.

Oh, GOD...

Oh, GOD, PLEASE NO...

MATT...

READY FOR THE CLICHE?

"IS THIS HEAVEN?"

I CAN'T PICK UP ANY SOUNDS BEYOND THE RUSTLE OF THE COSTUME, MY THROBBING HEAD, AND MY OWN HEARTBEAT.

WHICH MEANS I'M STILL ALIVE.

LUCKY DEVIL.

I'M IN A MAN-MADE VACUUM. SOMEONE WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO INSURE I CAN'T HEAR BEYOND THE WALLS OF THIS ROOM.

BUT IT IS A ROOM...

WHICH MEANS THERE'S A WAY OUT.

THE ALLEYWAY WAS A SET-UP. BUT WHO? CAN'T BE ANY OF THE USUAL SUSPECTS; WHY GO THROUGH ALL THE TROUBLE WITHOUT KILLING ME?

SOMEONE WANTS ME ALIVE...

AND TO STAY PUT.

IT'S GOING TO BE MY PLEASURE TO DISAPPOINT THEM.

I'M NOT ALONE.

THE PAIN...

I CAN BARELY MAKE OUT THE TUMBLERS SHIFTING AS THE DOORKNOB TURNS...

GOOD GOD! THAT SHRIEKING NOISE...! IT'S... DEAFENING...!

CACOPHONOUS BEYOND COMPREHENSION...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT SOUND IS, MISTER MURDOCK? THE ONE THAT'S SO EFFECTIVELY RENDERING YOUR HEIGHTENED SENSES AND EQUILIBRIUM USELESS?

IT'S AN ANGELIC SHRIEK.

IT'S THE CRY OF THE FALLEN -- THE SOUND AN ETHEREAL BEING UTTERS WHEN CAST OUT OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

SICKENING, ISN'T IT? FORTUNATELY, THE FREQUENCY IS SO HIGH, IT DOESN'T AFFECT ME. BUT I'M TOLD IT'S AGONIZING FOR DOGS.

AND FOR YOU, APPARENTLY.

P...P... PLEASE... SSS... SSS... STOP... I... IT...

I'M AFRAID IT'S QUITE NECESSARY TO KEEP YOU AT BAY.

WH... WHO... ARE... YOU..?

WHO I AM IS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE. BUT SINCE YOU ASK, YOU MAY CALL ME BAAL. IT'S AN UNFORTUNATE NAME, I KNOW.

WHAT... D... DO YOU... W... WANT... W... WI...

WHAT DO I WANT WITH YOU? YES -- WELL, IT'S SIMPLE REALLY.

MISTER MURDOCK, I'VE BEEN ON THIS MAN'S EARTH FOR *FIFTY-THREE* YEARS. MY SOLE PURPOSE HAS BEEN TO PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF SOMEONE SO IMPORTANT, I DARE NOT UTTER THE NAME, AS I'M NOT TRULY WORTHY.

THE SOUND IS UNEARTHLY...

AND OTHERS LIKE ME HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH THE HONOR OF RAISING THE FUTURE OF THIS AND EVERY OTHER WORLD --

-- OF PROTECTING IT FROM ANY HARM THAT MAY COME ITS WAY IN THIS, ITS MOST VULNERABLE TIME.

TRYING TO FOCUS ON THE SOURCE... BUT MY SENSES ARE IN COMPLETE DISARRAY...

AND AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE -- YOU BEING IN THE HERO BUSINESS AND ALL -- THERE ARE FORCES THAT OPPOSE ME AND MINE...

... THOSE WHO WOULD SEEK TO CORRUPT AND COMPROMISE ALL WE ENDEAVOR -- PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE.

WAIT... I THINK IT'S... YES!... IT'S COMING FROM...

THERE!... A SPEAKER... GOTTA GET A BEAD ON ITS EXACT ANGLE.

FOR ALL I KNOW, IT'S RIGHT BESIDE ME... OR THREE TOWNS AWAY... I'M HELPLESS... UNLESS...

WE KNOW THEY'VE ATTEMPTED TO RECRUIT YOU TO THEIR CAUSE, AND WE DON'T INTEND TO HOLD YOUR MOMENTARY LAPSE OF REASON AGAINST YOU.

YOU'VE BEEN MISINFORMED, MISTER MURDOCK -- IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT YOU CAN'T SEE THAT. YOU ARE, AFTER ALL, BLIND.

THERE!... A GAP IN THE SOUND!...

IT'S A LOOP... IT HAS A BEGINNING...

IT ALSO HAS AN END.

THERE'S A NANOSECOND PAUSE BEFORE THE LOOP STARTS ANEW...

HAVE TO CONCENTRATE... CLEAR MY HEAD... PHASE OUT CHATTY KATHY HERE...

FIND THE PATTERN... COUNT THE SECONDS TO THE BREAK... WAIT FOR IT...

I APOLOGIZE FOR DETAINING YOU, AND WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO END YOUR DISCOMFORT AND SEND YOU ON YOUR WAY.

BUT BEFORE ANY OF THAT CAN HAPPEN, I NEED TO KNOW ONE THING...

IT'S COMING... HOLD ON, MURDOCK... SHUT HIM OUT...

THE CHILD, MISTER MURDOCK -- THE VERY IMPORTANT CHILD...

IT'S COMING... KEEP HEAD CLEAR... HOLD ON...

WHERE IS THE CHILD?

HOLD ON...

NOW!

THOK

FAPP

Uh-Oh...

TIRED OF THIS...

SEEPING INTO EVERY CORNER OF MY LIFE...

INSANITY...

IT...

... ENDS ...

... HERE!

SMAK

OFF THE BOSS, RED!

THIS IS FOR JUMPING ON MY NECK!

SUBDUE HIM.

SMAK

SPAK

AMATEURS...

BUT STRONG AMATEURS...

DON'T SHOOT!

WE CAN'T RISK HARMING HIM!

KRAKOOM

STILL DISORIENTED...

THE GANG-UP DIDN'T MAKE IT ANY BETTER...

SENSES SCREWED UP...

CAN'T 'SEE'...

WHO YOU KIDDING, MURDOCK? YOU HAVEN'T 'SEEN' IN YEARS...

HONK HONK

SCREEEEE

HONK

NOT SINCE...

...YOU SAVED THAT OLD MAN FROM THAT...

...WHAT WAS IT AGAIN?...

OH YEAH...

A TRUCK...

ZONE EMPIRE